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Gehlen Is Retiring as German Intelligence Chief

Wessel Will Succeed Him
in Bonn Post Next May 1

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BONN, Jan. 15—The West German Government announced today that it had picked a seasoned military intelligence officer, Lieut. Gen. Gerhard Wessel, to succeed Reinhard Gehlen as head of the Government's Intelligence Service.

General Wessel, 54, has been the West German representative on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Military Committee, first in Washington and later in Brussels, and has had experience in artillery and armored warfare. But his principal assignments have been in intelligence.

He will take over May 1, a month after General Gehlen's 66th birthday and compulsory retirement. General Wessel is a protégé of his predecessor.

During World War II, General Gehlen commanded the I-C section of Hitler's Supreme Army Command, which kept watch on the Red Army and all that went on behind the front lines. In 1945 he defected to the American Army, bringing most of his staff and files to the Office of Strategic Services, a predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Since then full-face photographs of General Gehlen have not been publicly available and he has worked closely with United States intelligence agencies, which gave him a new lease on life.

An artillery captain in 1941, the 27-year-old Wessel went straight from a course in the War Academy to General Gehlen's section.

The young Intelligence officer was reputed to have such a keen analytical mind that he was able to forecast a major Soviet offensive in January, 1945, four days before it occurred. Hitler dismissed the analysis as "completely idiotic" and recommended that the officer, by this time a lieutenant colonel, be sent to a mental asylum. On Jan. 12, 1945, Soviet troops cracked the German lines as predicted, and Colonel Wessel stayed on with General Gehlen.

In 1952 General Gehlen detached Colonel Wessel from their work for the Americans and sent him from their lightly guarded compound in the Mu-

New Head Has Long Served
on NATO Committee

nich suburb of Pullach to Bonn to help organize intelligence services for the new West German Army.

General Wessel, appointed full colonel in 1955, and brigadier general in 1958, is regarded as the founder of the West German Army's counter-intelligence service, which he headed for seven years. In 1962 he took command of the Second Armored Infantry Brigade at Braunschweig.

Like his mentor General Gehlen has stayed in the background as much as possible. He is not listed in West German directories. An East German listing of Nazis published in 1965 lists him as "confidential agent of Nazi General Gehlen."

General Wessel, a dark-haired man, is tall enough to be called "der grosse Gerhard" by his comrades. He is married and has two children. He was born Dec. 24, 1913, in the Holstein city of Neumünster, the son of a pastor. He joined the German Army in 1932, directly after graduation from high school.

General Wessel takes over an organization whose reputation for omniscience has suffered seriously in recent years. The "Gehlen Organization" has been the butt of mockery by Western spy novelists, and occasionally by Communist espionage authorities. Many of its agents have been captured in East Germany and several have been exposed in the Soviet Union.

The West German Intelligence Service no longer has the high-level entrée it had under the late Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Last summer, a government spokesman, Conrad Ahlers, said his Public Information Office was quicker with news about the Arab-Israeli conflict than the intelligence service. Its annual budget is said to be more than \$25-million.

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